



# Public Participation Network *Kilkenny*

## Strategic Plan 2025-2030



## Strategic Plan Scope:

Following a competitive tender process concluded in April 2024, Prescience Business & Management Development Ltd was selected by KPPN to develop a strategic plan for the period 2025-2030; its' first since inception in 2016. Bespoke and tailored uniquely to the needs of KPPN and to the demographic and spatial context in County Kilkenny, the purpose of the strategic plan is to articulate the vision, mission and values of the organisation as well as identifying the strategic pillars, objectives and development actions which combined within a coherent development framework, can be expected to sustain a robust, thriving and resilient advocacy and representation network and forum for communities of place, interest and practice.

## Strategic Plan Objectives:

Thus defined, the strategic plan fulfils a number of functions. As a roadmap of objectives and actions, it guides the operations of the KPPN, defining its purpose and direction. Furthermore, it reflects good governance and accountability, allocating the resources necessary for the effective delivery of agreed actions and the monitoring and evaluation of outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is also the basis for communication with stakeholders and beneficiaries, aligning them in the pursuit of common goals and offering clarity and assurance for its funders.

## Strategic Plan Principles:

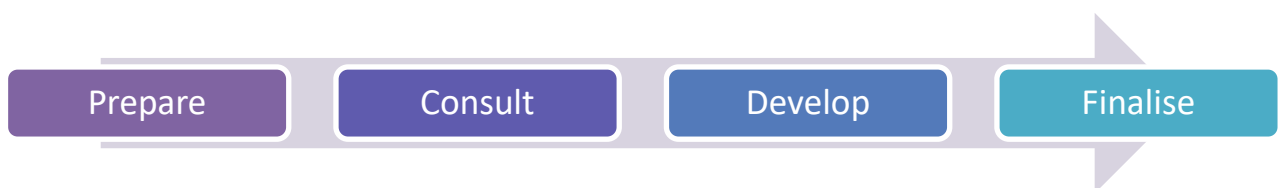
A number of key principles were fundamental in shaping the strategic planning process. These included:

- The capacity to operate effectively within the scope, mission and resources of the KPPN.
- Active stakeholder engagement in the design of the strategic plan and a shared ownership and commitment its' implementation over the medium term.
- Partnership and collaboration between all stakeholders to ensure the best use of scarce resources in building scale and impact.
- Equality and inclusiveness as emphasised in the [Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector](#) guidance document (*Department of Community and Rural Development, 2023*).

- Sustainability, defined as the optimal balance and integration of social, economic and environmental assets, rights and resources.
- Wellbeing, defined as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world in accordance with a sense of meaning and purpose.
- Equality, defined as the state of being equal in status, rights and opportunities.
- Alignment with the enabling national and local development context for sustainability, wellbeing and equality.
- Alignment with relevant national, regional and local policies, strategies, plans and funding sources.
- Legitimacy and acceptance by funders, policy makers and other stakeholders.
- Value for money in delivery and impact.

## Strategic Plan Methodology:

The strategic plan was designed and developed through four successive phases, each of which was discrete but related, as follows:



*Evidence-based Planning* was used to evaluate local societal, demographic needs, challenges and opportunities within a changing policy and funding context. This was shaped by an understanding and analysis of:

- Current demographic data and trends derived from Central Statistics Office and Pobal data.
- Evolution and development of PPN policy, scope, mission and resources as well as the legacy assets developed since 2016.
- Relevant EU, national, regional, local and thematic policies and strategies for social, economic and environmental development.

*Participatory Planning* enabled active stakeholder engagement and consultation which helped to:

- Enhance awareness of the KPPN, its ethos and scope of operations.

- Engage groups and individuals indirectly through their representative organisations, advocates and community leaders.
- Encourage engagement from individuals and groups that were unable or unwilling to engage in scheduled, open consultation activities and events.
- Build an understanding of diverse perspectives, needs and ambitions.
- Review past performance.
- Proactively suggest ideas and solutions to address organisational weaknesses.

A co-designed process identified, targeted and engaged key stakeholders and those most likely to positively influence and benefit from the design and implementation of the strategic plan. Clarity of thought and expression as well as open communication helped to build understanding and manage stakeholder expectations, enabling collaboration and a commitment to a shared vision. Aside from internal stakeholder participants in the facilitation process, KPPN nominated external stakeholders including Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and the Kilkenny Volunteer Centre.

## Key Events and Activities:

The active phase of stakeholder consultation took place between April 3<sup>rd</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup> 2023, anchored by 4 complementary approaches:

- Presentations to the KPPN Co-ordinator and Secretariat in person and via zoom on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, May 7<sup>th</sup>, May 13<sup>th</sup>, June 7<sup>th</sup> to agree strategic planning methodology, report on progress, troubleshoot constraints and clarify outstanding issues.
- An anonymised and confidential online survey was launched on May 20<sup>th</sup> and remained open throughout the months of June and July, closing on August 15<sup>th</sup>, at the point at which saturation was deemed to have occurred i.e. the questionnaire no longer yielded additional contributions, perspectives or information.
- Presentation to the KPPN Plenary at its bi-annual meeting on May 29<sup>th</sup><sup>1</sup>.
- Discussions via *Zoom* with selected KPPN representatives on Kilkenny Co. Council Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) as well as representatives from Kilkenny County Council, Kilkenny LEADER Partnership and the Kilkenny Volunteer Centre.

---

<sup>1</sup> This event was also a celebration to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the PPNs nationally.

## Stakeholder Survey:

To ensure that the strategic plan would reflect the ambitions and goals of its stakeholders, be stakeholder-led and would be underpinned by useful quantitative and qualitative data, an online survey was circulated to all 446 member organisations listed on the KPPN database. The survey was short and focused containing a mix of 13 short questions comprised of ranked, multiple choice questions and less structured, open-ended questions and comment fields through which respondents could share their thoughts, concerns, perspectives, experiences and future ambitions. The survey was actively promoted through social media and email communications and was the basis through which further individual face-to-face, public meeting or online engagement was achieved.

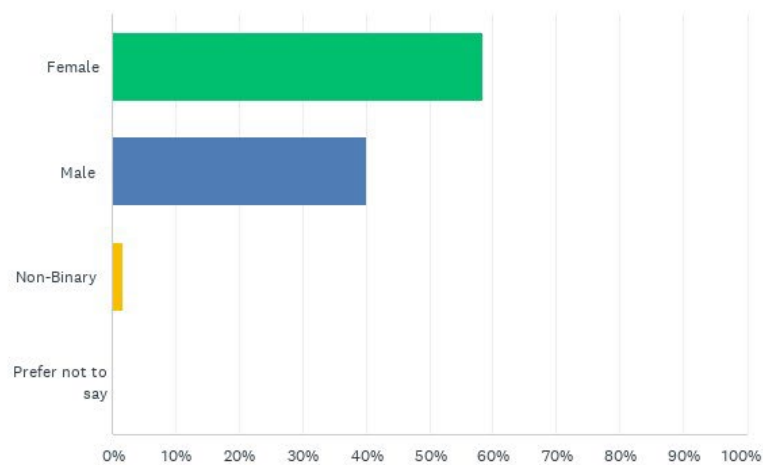
In all, contributions and qualitative feedback was sourced from 129 respondents, with a survey completion rate of 100%. On average, respondents took 3 minutes and 46 seconds to complete the survey, suggesting strong interest in and engagement in the subject matter. All data used in the survey is as per the respondents answer; there being no other assumptions or interpretation made on their behalf. However, where useful for the purposes of this research, local data is assessed and considered in the context of international and national research findings as well as other quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the pandemic and its effects. For clarity, all percentage figures recorded and used in the study are rounded to the nearest decimal point. This may account in instances where figures, when added, do not equal 100%.

While it is believed that of stakeholder engagement process was sufficiently robust and comprehensive some potential limitations of its scope and methodology might be noted. These include the accuracy of the KPPN member database; the reliance on convenience sampling - a non-probability method - whose data collection relies on self-selection, availability and interest in the issue; the requirement of individual respondents to answer and advocate on behalf of a wider geographic community, demographic or interest group; and difficulties in estimating sampling variability and identifying possible bias as well as issues of digital access and literacy. A copy of the survey, a visual summary of respondent's answers as well as accompanying selected quotes is contained in the appendices of this document.

## Summary of Survey Findings:

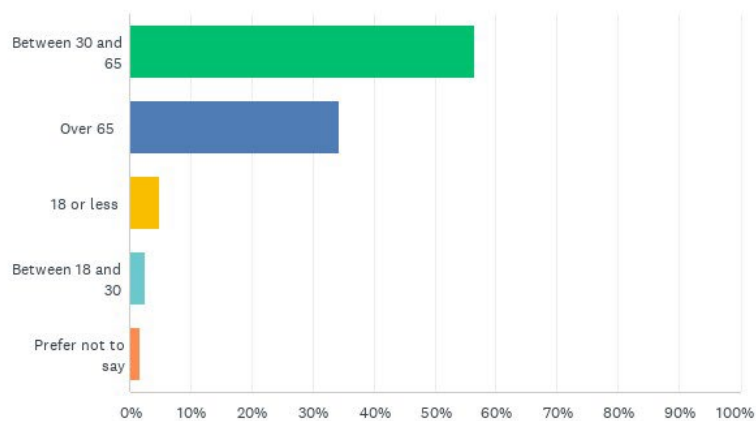
Selected feedback from the Online Survey (n=129) is presented in summary form. Please note that all data has been anonymised and that detailed information offered by respondents, while used in framing the objectives and actions in the socio-economic plan, has been kept confidential.

### 1. Gender



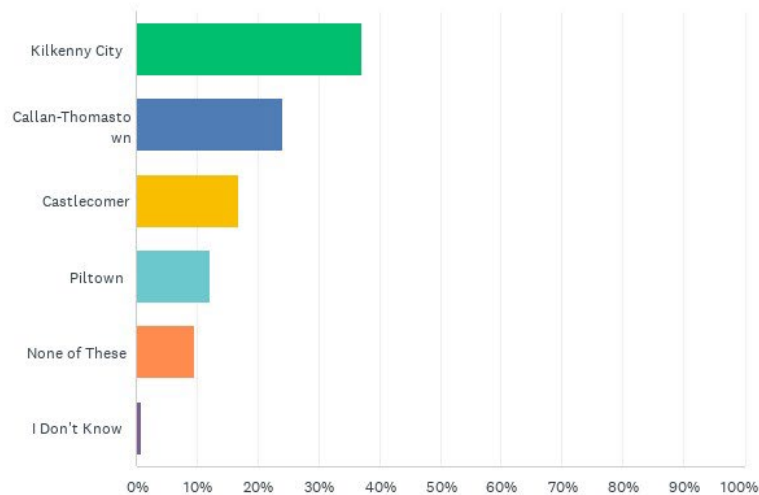
The greater proportion of respondents was female (59%), 40% were male and 1% identified as non-binary.

### 2. Age



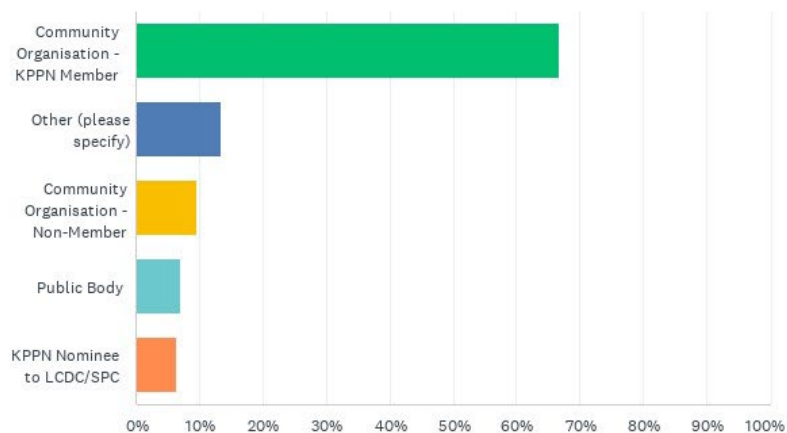
Over half of all respondents (56%) were aged between 30-65 years. 35% were aged over 65 years. 5% were aged 18 years or less and 2% were aged between 18-30 years.

### 3. Location



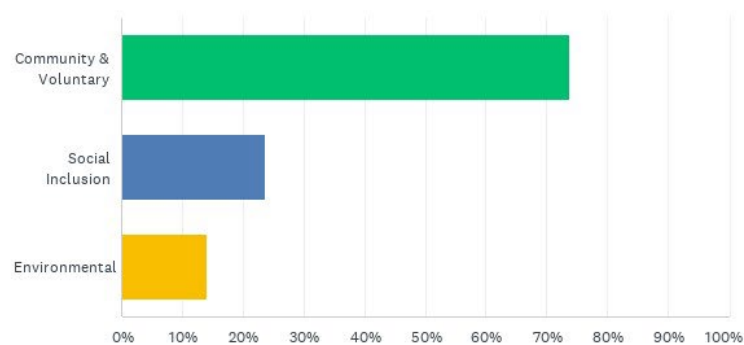
The Kilkeny City Municipal District (MD) accounted for 37% of all respondents. A further 24% reside in Callan-Thomastown MD with 17% and 12% residing in Castlecomer MD and Piltown MD respectively. 10% of respondents stated that they did not reside in any of these areas.

### 4. Affiliation



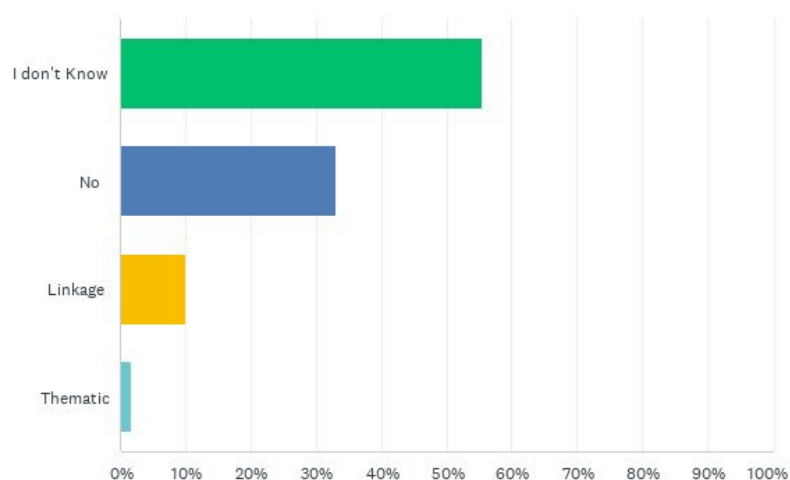
Two thirds of respondents (66%) stated that they contributed to the survey primarily as a member of a community organisation affiliated to KPPN. 10% did so as a representative of a community organisation not affiliated to KPPN. 7% did so as a representative of a public body with 6% doing so as KPPN nominee to the LCDC or an SPC. The remainder (11%) did so in other capacities including as individuals and interested third parties.

## 5. College Representation



The greater proportion of respondents (74%) stated that they did so as representatives of organisations affiliated the Community & Voluntary College (63%), with 23% and 14% doing so as representatives of the Social Inclusion and Environmental Colleges respectively.

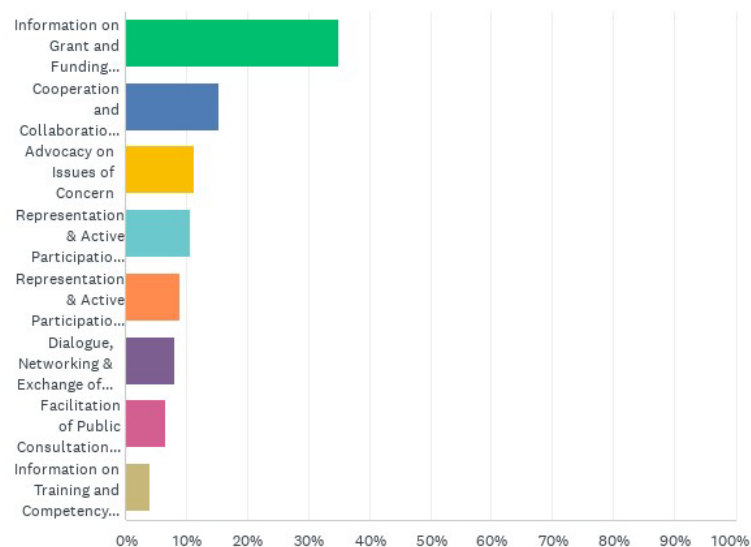
## 6. Thematic & Linkage Groups





The greater proportion of respondents (56%) did not know if their community organisation was represented by a *Thematic* or *Linkage Group*. A third (33%) stated that their community organisation was not affiliated to either. 10% stated that their community organisation was affiliated to a *Linkage Group* with the remaining 1% stating that their community organisation was affiliated to a *Thematic Group*.

## 7. Most Valued Supports



When asked to select *the most valued support* provided by KPPN and limited to a single choice from a pre-determined menu of options, respondents ranked the most valued as follows:

Rank	Support	%
1	Information on Grant and Funding Opportunities	35
2	Cooperation and Collaboration between Public bodies and the Wider community	16
3	Advocacy on issues of Concern	11
4	Representation & Active Participation in Decision-making within KPPN	10
5	Representation & Active Participation in Decision-making within other Organisations	9
6	Dialogue, Networking & Exchange of best Practice between Communities	8
7	Facilitation of Public Consultation & Stakeholder Engagement	6
8	Information on Training & Competency Development	4
9	Other	1

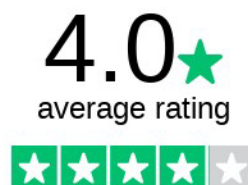
## 8. Quality & Relevance of Communications & Information



Respondents rated the quality and relevance of the communications received from the KPPN as *Good* overall. This is a weighted average derived from a 5 point scale, broken down as follows:

Rank	Rating	%
1	Good	52
2	Excellent	23
3	Adequate	20
4	Requires Improvement	4
5	Poor	1

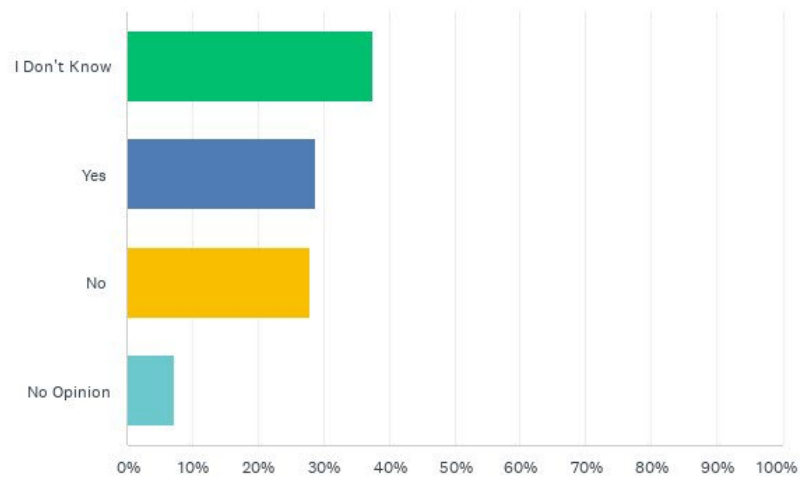
## 9. Frequency of Communications & Information



Respondents rated the frequency of the communications received from the KPPN as *Good* overall. This is a weighted average derived from a 5 point scale, broken down as follows:

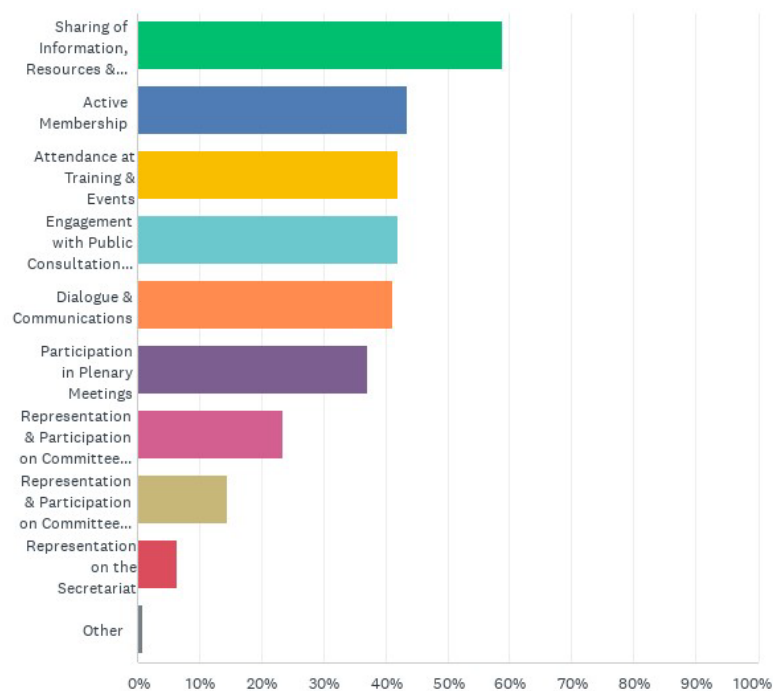
Rank	Rating	%
1	Good	43
2	Excellent	32
3	Adequate	18
4	Requires Improvement	6
5	Poor	1

## 10. Representation in Decision-making.



Most respondents were unclear (37%), doubtful or negative (28%) or indifferent (7%) on the issue of adequacy of representation on local decision-making committees. Fewer than one third of respondents (28%) considered the level and nature of representation to be satisfactory.

## 11. How Members Can Best Support the Work of KPPN



Respondents were asked to consider how best support the work of KPPN could be supported through the active engagement and participation of its member organisations. Allowing for multiple choices from a pre-determined menu of options, respondents ranked the activities of greatest interest as follows:

Rank	Support	%
1	Sharing of Information, Resources & Skills	59
2	Active Membership	44
3	Attendance at Training & Events	42
4	Engagement with Public Consultation Opportunities	42
5	Dialogue & Communications	41
6	Participation in Plenary Meetings	37
7	Representation and Participation on Committees – KPPN	23
8	Representation and Participation on Committees – Other Organisations	14
9	Representation on the Secretariat	6
10	Other	1

## Summary of Key Issues Arising:

Using a mixed methodology, the consultation process has been key to building an understanding of the perspectives, experiences and ambitions of KPPN’s many and diverse stakeholders. A summary of the key issues arising from the consultation, which are to be addressed in the Objectives and Actions set out in the Strategic Plan 2025-2030, are as follows:

- Confusion amongst member organisations over the precise purpose, role of and resources available to the KPPN.
- Poor knowledge of the independence of the KPPN and the conflation of its work and activities with those of Kilkenny County Council and other organisations.
- Low recognition/appreciation of KPPN representation on and participation in local authority decision-making structures.
- Poor appreciation of the role of the KPPN as the principal medium for the active representation and participation in important county based decision-making structures and committees by its member organisations.
- Representation on decision-making structures tends to be *token* or *placatory* rather than *participative*.

- Reporting and communications from SPC/LCDC representatives to the KPPN Secretariat, Thematic & Linkage Groups (and thereafter to the wider membership) is sub-optimal.
- There is a need for member organisations to move from passive to active support for KPPN’s advocacy, representation on and active participation in SPCs/LCDC.
- The role of KPPN in providing useful and timely information to its member organisations, particularly in relation to funding schemes, grants, training and events, is widely appreciated and valued.
- KPPN plays a positive role in enabling member organisations to engage with public consultation processes.
- Notwithstanding the active engagement of the KPPN in the development of the *Local Economic Community Plan 2023-2028* (LECP), as published, there is no explicit reference to any planning, implementation or monitoring role for the KPPN, whether singly or in partnership with another agency/forum<sup>2</sup>.
- There is minimal awareness of the use and impact of the KPPN *Vision for Community Wellbeing* since its development in 2020/21. Moreover, it is not explicitly referenced in the *City and County Development Plan 2021-2027*, *LECP* or *LEADER Local Development Strategy 2023-2027*.
- Communications and feedback with external organisations is asymmetric and lacking in formal protocols or processes.
- The need to define and communicate “*what success looks like*” by capturing precise data to measure outcome and impact.
- A *Digital First* strategy limits communication with and the engagement and participation of certain demographics for whom access, literacy and understanding is a particular constraint (*older, disadvantaged, migrants, international protected, socially excluded, etc*).

---

<sup>2</sup> *The monitoring of High-Level Goal 1 (Theme 1 Climate Change) will be the responsibility of Kilkenny County Council. The monitoring of the economic actions (Theme 2) will be the responsibility of Kilkenny County Council’s SPC for Economic Development, Enterprise Support and Tourism (SPC1). The monitoring of the community actions (Theme 3) will be the responsibility of the County Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). This will include liaising with those Lead Partners outside of the Council who are responsible for community actions. The LECP Advisory Group, comprising representatives of the LCDC and SPC1, will have the responsibility for co-ordinating the monitoring process and preparing associated reporting outputs. This Group will draw upon support staff from the LCDC and SPC1 as required to prepare the annual monitoring reporting outputs. (Source: Local Economic Community Plan 2023-2028).*

- The effectiveness of a *Digital First* strategy is fully dependent on the quality and accuracy of the KPPN member database and the principal contacts listed therein.
- Amongst member organisations, there is a desire for more outreach and in-person activities and events to enable better engagement and participation as well as better facilitate dialogue and networking amongst member organisations/representatives. This is particular true for marginalised and disengaged groups and those in geographically peripheral communities.
- There is a need to actively facilitate the engagement with and inclusion of with “*hard to reach groups*” and “*unheard voices*”, particularly in supporting their engagement with county-based advocacy and decision-making structures.
- There is potential to actively facilitate resource sharing, peer learning and exchange of knowledge best practice between member organisations.
- There is low-level engagement from and participation by youth/young people as active members of the KPPN and its Secretariat.
- Member organisations are volunteer-led but lack the necessary financial and time resources to engage fully and consistently with the work of the KPPN.
- A lack in community capacity and resources requires an increased emphasis on advocacy on behalf of member organisations and interests.
- The legacy effect of Covid-19 has negatively impacted on community and voluntary participation generally, particularly so given the age profile of volunteers.
- There is a need to align the membership of the Secretariat more closely to the active volunteer profile of County Kilkenny.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> 15,921 people (15% of the County population) claim to engage in one or more voluntary activities with Males accounting for 53%; marginally higher than the national figures of 14% and 51% respectively. Volunteering participation tends to be higher in outlying rural communities with the highest urban participation levels found in Thomastown (14%), Kilkenny City (13%) and Callan (11%); each below the County average.

2,720 people (2.5% of the County population) engage in more than one voluntary activity. Volunteering in Sports activities account for a greater proportion of people in Kilkenny, (7% - 7,497 individuals) than either Community (5% - 5,176 individuals) or Social Charity (4% - 3,772 individuals); nationally volunteering for Sports activities accounted for a 50% increase between 2006 and 2022, almost double that of the increase in volunteering more generally. The average age of a volunteer in County Kilkenny is 48.2 years with the age profile higher for Community (50.3 years) and Social/Charity (53.1 years) and lower for Sports (43.2 years); older than the national figure of 38.8 years. **(Source: CSO Census 2022 Volunteering In Ireland).**

There are 114 Sporting Organisations affiliated to the KPPN, comprising a quarter of all its membership.

## Appendices:

1. Online Survey
2. The KPPN Theory of Change
3. The Ladder of Citizen Participation
4. Stakeholder Management
5. Social Network Analysis
6. Nine Principles for Inclusive Community Engagement

## 1. Online Survey





**Public Participation  
Network Kilkenny**

Kilkenny Public Participation Network - Stakeholder Consultation Survey

Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Since 2016, the Kilkenny Public Participation Network (KPPN) has enabled its member groups to input into and have their voices heard within the formal decision-making structures of Kilkenny County Council as well as in other important development organisations throughout the county.

We're currently developing a strategic plan for the 2025-2030 period to deliver on our vision as *an integral and respected local decision-making partner and network which is engaged and pro-actively consulted in the development of the economic, social, community and infrastructural policies; one whose members are well supported and aware of their ability to make a difference for their community.*

As we prepare our new Strategic Plan, we'd love to hear from you. Here's a short survey that will help you let us how we've been doing and how we might improve active citizenship, engagement, communication and representation with the organisations shaping our future. Please take this opportunity to make your voice heard and always remember that "*decisions are made by those who show up*".

**Be assured that all responses to this survey are anonymous and confidential.**

1. I am...

- Female                       Male                       Non-Binary  
 Prefer not to say

2. I am aged...

- 18 or less                       Between 30 and 65                       Over 65  
 Between 18 and 30                       Prefer not to say

3. I live in the Municipal District of...

- Kilkenny City
- Thomastown
- I Don't Know
- Castlecomer
- Piltown
- None of These

4. I'm contributing to this survey as a..

- Community Organisation - KPPN Member
- KPPN Nominee to LCDC/SPC
- Community Organisation - Non-Member
- Public Body
- Other (please specify)

5. If your community organisation is currently a member of KPPN, to which *College* is it affiliated?

- Community & Voluntary
- Social Inclusion
- Environmental

6. If your community organisation is currently a member of a *Thematic* or *Linkage* group within KPPN?

- Thematic
- Linkage
- No
- I don't Know

Please comment further, if you wishOther (please specify)

7. What KPPN services and supports are of most value to your organisation? Please tick all that apply

- Representation & Active Participation in Decision-Making - Within KPPN
- Advocacy on Issues of Concern
- Representation & Active Participation in Decision Making - Within Other Organisations
- Cooperation and Collaboration between Public Bodies and the Wider Community
- Information on Grant and Funding Opportunities
- Dialogue, Networking & Exchange of Best Practice between Communities
- Information on Training and Competency Development
- Facilitation of Public Consultation & Stakeholder Engagement

Other (please specify)

8. How would you rate the quality and relevance of the communications and information that you receive?

Poor
Requires Improvement
Adequate
Good
Excellent



Please comment, if you wish

9. How would you rate the frequency of the communications and information that you receive?

Poor	Requires Improvement	Adequate	Good	Excellent
★	★	★	★	★

Please comment further, if you wish.

10. Do you believe that the interests of your community is adequately represented on the relevant local decision-making committees?

- Yes                       No                       I Don't Know  
 No Opinion

Please comment further, if you wish.

11. In what way can your community can best support the work of KPPN? Please tick all that apply.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Active Membership                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Representation & Participation on Committees - Non KPPN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in Plenary Meetings                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing of Information, Resources & Skills              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Representation on the Secretariat                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue & Communications                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendance at Training & Events                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement with Public Consultation Opportunities       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Representation & Participation on Committees - KPPN | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |

Please comment further, if you wish.

12. In what way can KPPN best support your community organisation?

13. Please feel free to add any further suggestions, observations or comments -including any strengths, opportunities, weaknesses or constraints - that you think might be relevant to the development of the KPPN Strategic Plan 2025-2030.



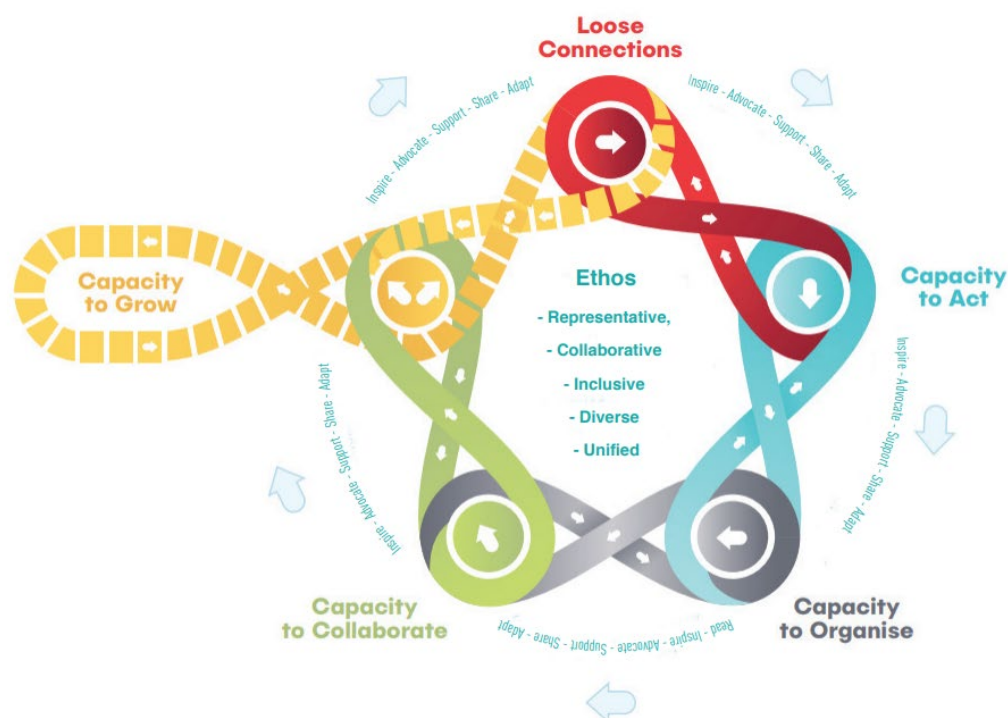
## 2: Theory of Change

*Theory of Change* is a methodology that explains how a given set of interventions is expected to lead to desired changes and outcomes within an organisation. Essentially a roadmap for planning and implementation, it is an explicit process of thinking through and documenting how, why and for whom the KPPN will work. Its purpose is to clearly convey the strategic approach, inherent assumptions and core hypotheses about how the KPPN will achieve the social, economic and environmental change desired by its stakeholders over the medium term.

A schematic representation – which reflects the feedback from consultation phase – outlines the principles and sequential actions necessary in order for KPPN to address the priorities of its stakeholders and effect tangible progress and change on their behalf. Within the strategic plan themes, objectives and strategic actions are designed to be interdependent and mutually reinforcing with numerous synergies and exchange flows.

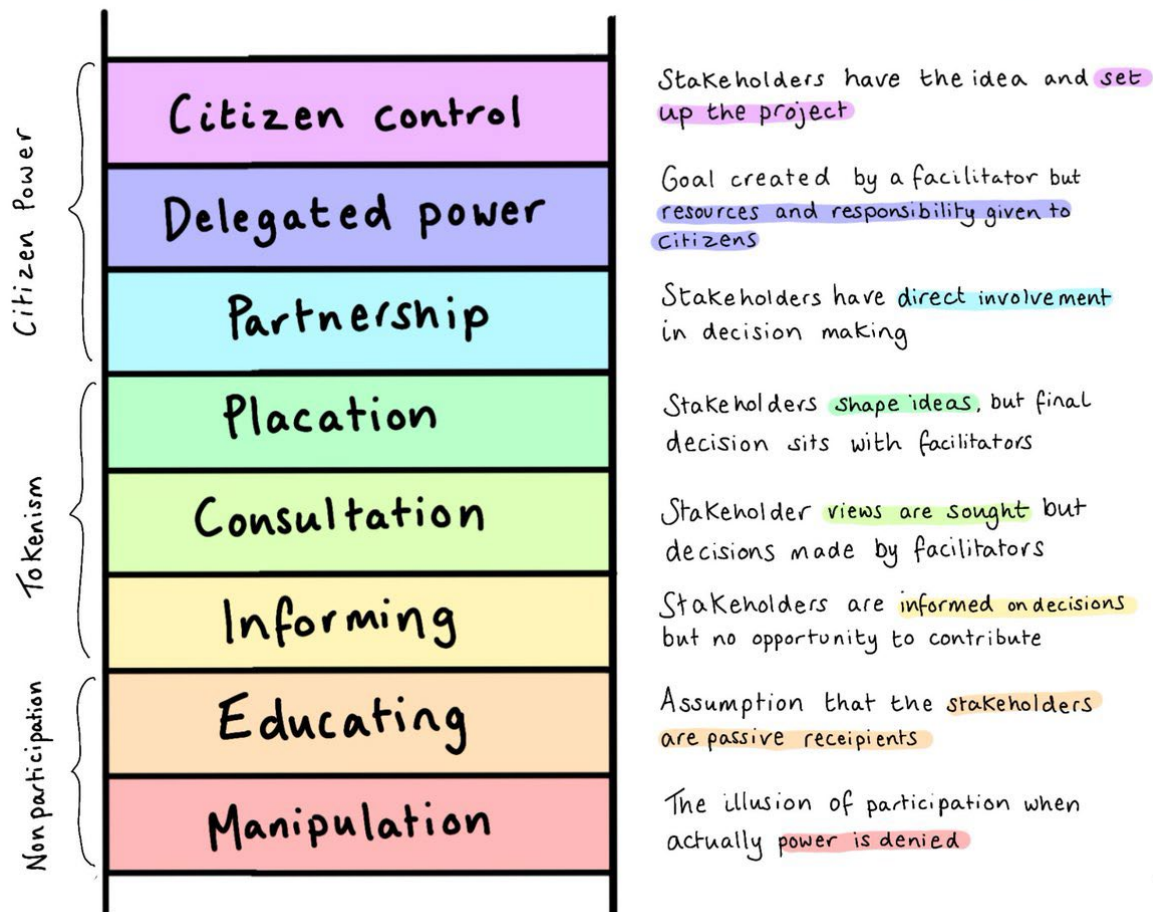
### THE KPPN THEORY OF CHANGE

*AN INTEGRAL AND RESPECTED LOCAL DECISION-MAKING PARTNER AND NETWORK WHICH IS PRO-ACTIVELY CONSULTED WITH AND ENGAGED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL CO.KILKENNY ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, COMMUNITY AND INFRASTRUCTURAL POLICIES.*



### 3: The Ladder of Citizen Participation

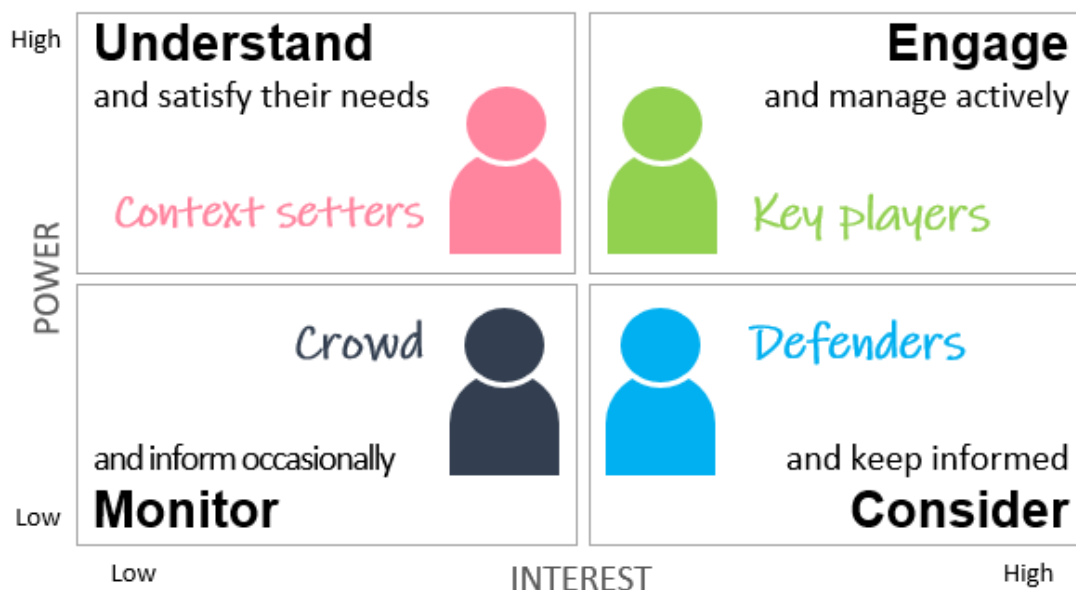
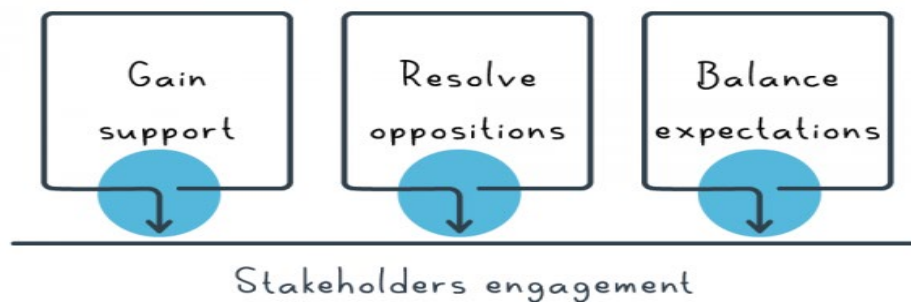
## Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969)



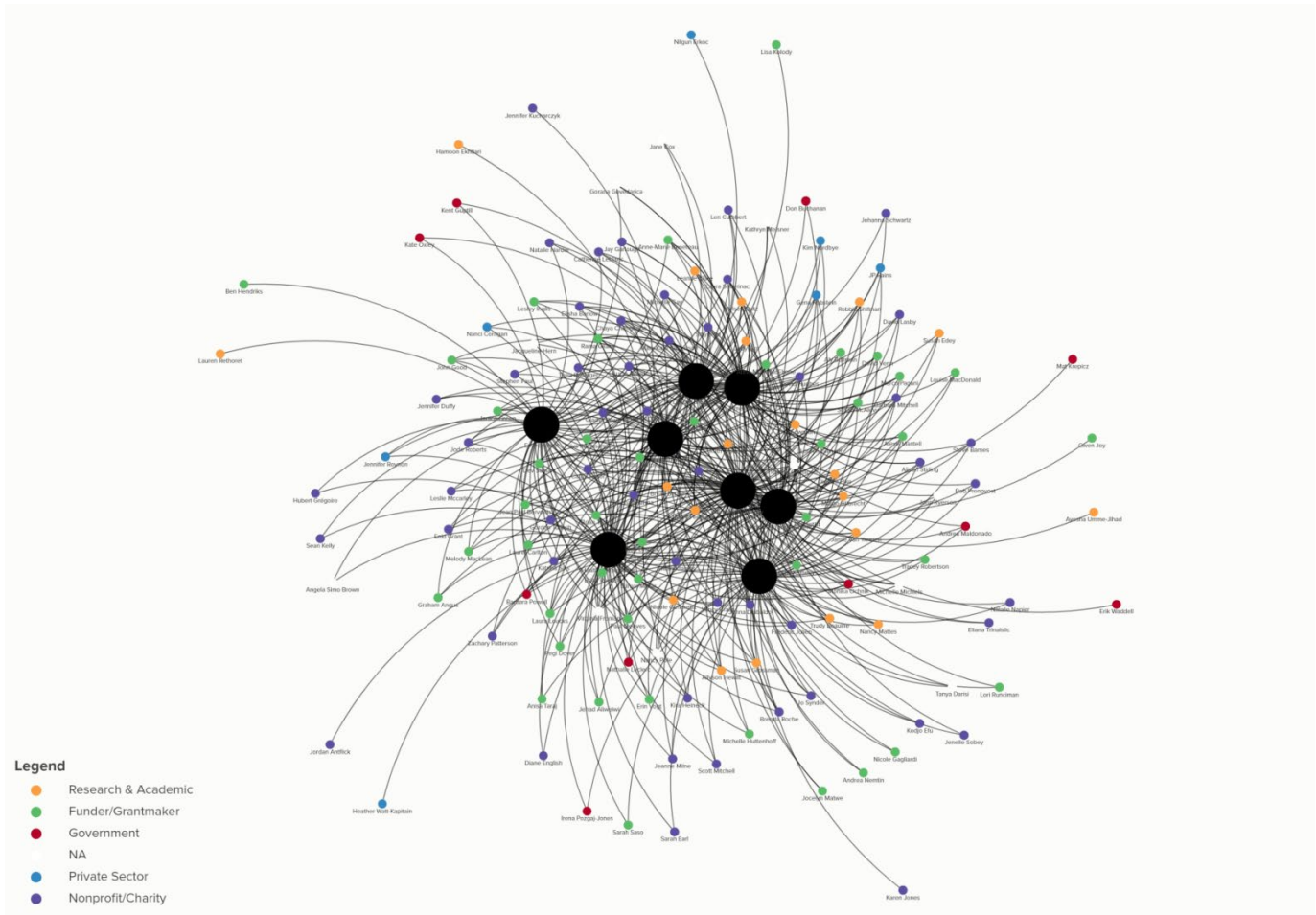
@creative.clinical.psychologist

Drawn by Juliet Young

## 4: Stakeholder Management



# 5: Social Network Analysis





## 6: Nine Principles for Inclusive Community Engagement.

